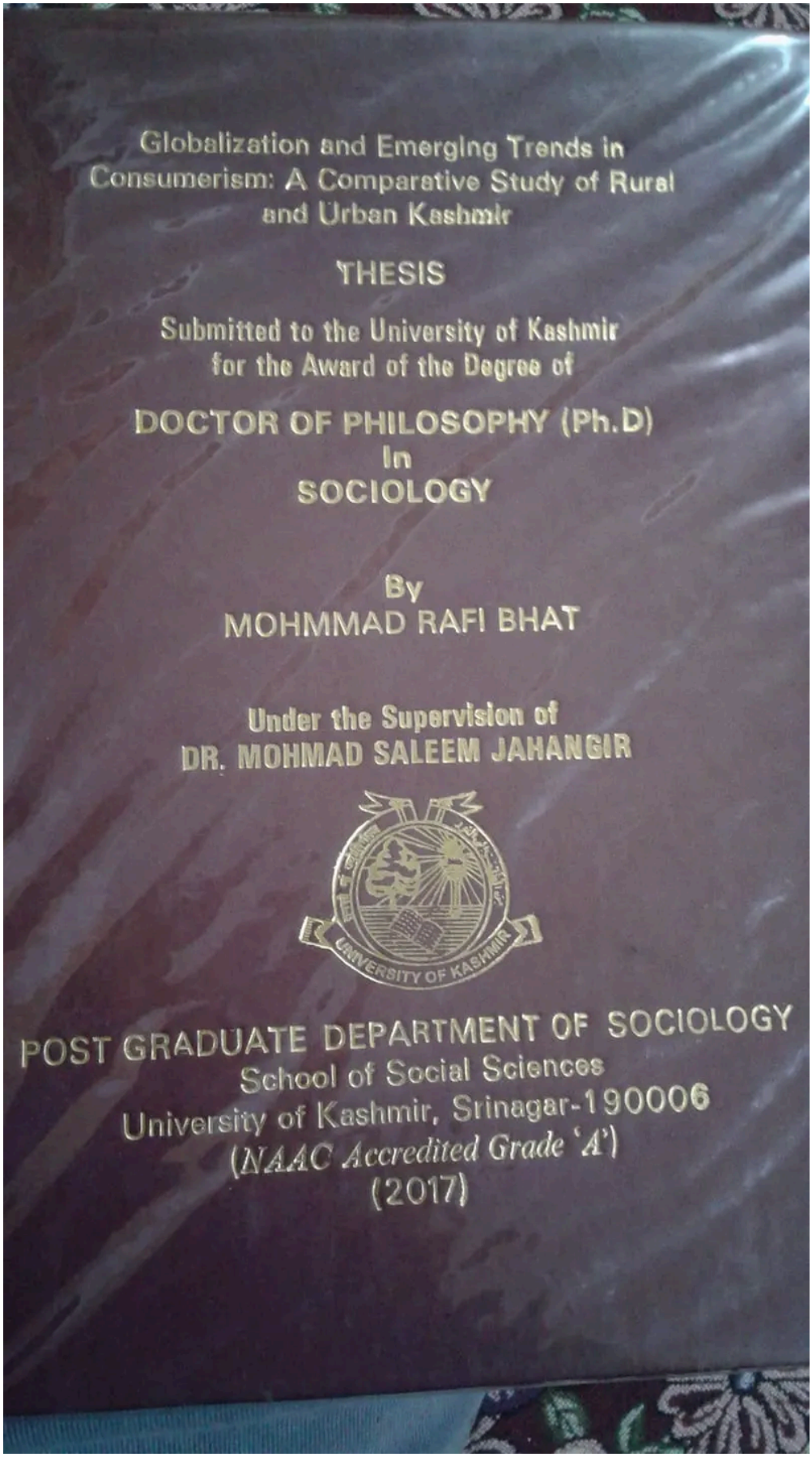
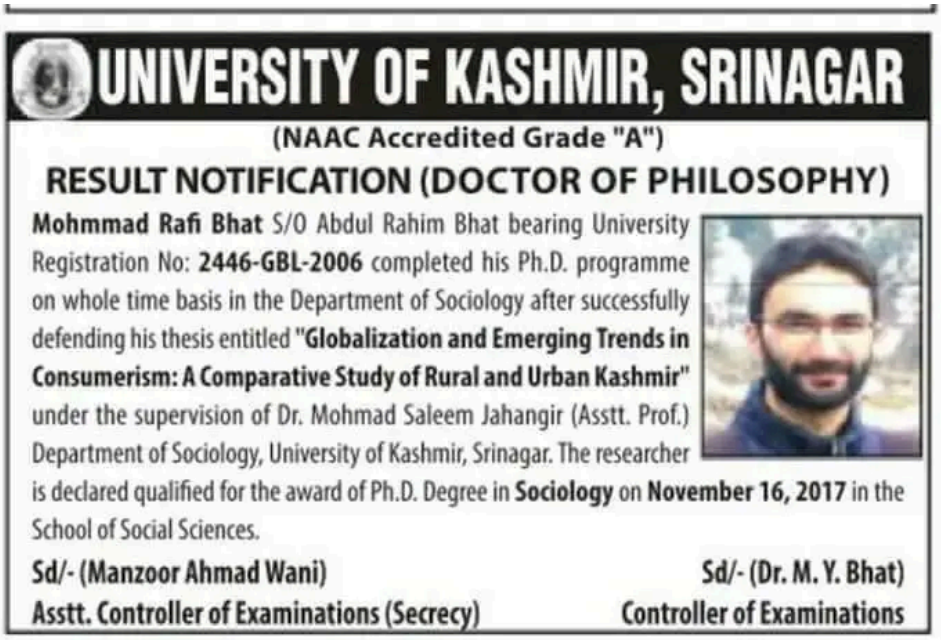
MAY 8, 2018 / SUVAID YASEEN

THE BELOVED REBEL, PROFESSOR OF SOCIOLOGY

[su_highlight background="#9ff6aa"]**Dr. Mohmmad Rafi Bhat is an Assistant Professor of Sociology at the University of Kashmir. He has been working in the Department for the past year-and-a-half and teaches a graduate course on Sociology of Religion. He successfully defended his PhD dissertation entitled "Globalization and Emerging Trends in Consumerism: A Comparative Study of Rural and Urban Kashmir" in November 2017. Earlier this year, he published a paper on "Stone Pelting: A New Form of Protest in Kashmir." In all, he has 29 publications to his credit. He has also written opinion pieces for Kashmir based dailies. Dr. Bhat cleared the National Eligibility Test (NET) twice, he has been a recipient of the prestigious Junior Research Fellowship (JRF), and also topped the Jammu and Kashmir State Eligibility Test (JKSET).**[/su_highlight]


Globalization and Emerging Trends in Consumerism: A Comparative Study of Rural and Urban Kashmir
THESIS
Submitted to the University of Kashmir for the Award of the Degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (Ph.D)
In
SOCIOLOGY
By
MOHMMAD RAFI BHAT
Under the Supervision of
DR. MOHMAD SALEEM JAHANGIR
UNIVERSITY OF KASHMIR
POST GRADUATE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY
School of Social Sciences
University of Kashmir, Srinagar-190006
(NAAC Accredited Grade 'A')
(2017)

Something like above would have read as the brief academic profile of thirty-two-year-old Dr. Mohmmad Rafi Bhat till Sunday May 6, 2018. Now, he shares an additional prefix—*Shaheed,* Martyr—on his gravestone along with a hundred thousand others in Kashmir.



UNIVERSITY OF KASHMIR, SRINAGAR

(NAAC Accredited Grade "A")

RESULT NOTIFICATION (DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY)

Mohmmad Rafi Bhat S/O Abdul Rahim Bhat bearing University Registration No: **2446-GBL-2006** completed his Ph.D. programme on whole time basis in the Department of Sociology after successfully defending his thesis entitled **"Globalization and Emerging Trends in Consumerism: A Comparative Study of Rural and Urban Kashmir"** under the supervision of Dr. Mohmad Saleem Jahangir (Asstt. Prof.) Department of Sociology, University of Kashmir, Srinagar. The researcher is declared qualified for the award of Ph.D. Degree in **Sociology** on **November 16, 2017** in the School of Social Sciences.

Sd/- (Manzoor Ahmad Wani)
Asstt. Controller of Examinations (Secrecy)

Sd/- (Dr. M. Y. Bhat)
Controller of Examinations

On the morning of Friday May 4, Rafi lectured at his department as usual. He informed his students that he was leaving soon for an interview at the University of Hyderabad. He had been shortlisted for the post of assistant professor, and his name topped the list. The students did not see him again even as he was supposed to deliver a lecture after the Friday prayers. Back at his home at Chunduna village in Central Kashmir's Ganderbal district, Rafi's family was expecting him to return as usual in the evening. He had called them earlier in the day and asked to keep the dinner ready. He never arrived. On Sunday morning, around 7:55 am, Abdul Raheem Bhat received a call to hear his son's final words:

[su_quote]I am trapped in a cordon. I am sorry if I have hurt you. Please forgive me for my mistakes. This is my final call. I am going to meet Allah.[/su_quote]

Rafi was trapped in a cordon in South Kashmir's Shopian district along with four well-known rebels of the Hizbul Mujahideen. The latter included: senior commander Saddam Padder who was also the final living member of the 'Burhan Wani group'; Tauseef Sheikh; Bilal Moulvi; and Adil Thoker. In a short time after Rafi's call to his father, all five were killed in the gun-battle with a combined posse of the Indian Army's 44 Rashtriya Rifles (RR), 34 RR, and 3 RR battalions, along with contingents of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), and the Special Operations Group (SOG). The latter also shot dead six civilians and injured more than a hundred in protests during and after the encounter. Most had bullet injuries above waist and pellet injuries in eyes. Just a day earlier, the Indian armed personnel had killed three rebels in the capital city of Srinagar, while one civilian was killed during protests after being deliberately overrun by a Jammu and Kashmir police vehicle.

Rafi had probably left home to join the rebels, but his tryst lasted only some thirty-six hours.

A university student addressed the gathering of thousands at his funeral: "Our beloved teacher was strict in maintaining discipline, optimistic about freedom, and used to advise students to keep spirits up." Another was reported as saying: "He was a brilliant teacher. Before leaving he advised us to study hard." His neighbors remember him as a "pious and down-to-earth" man who "was loved by everyone" and "never raised his voice with any of the villagers."Youngest among his three siblings, he was married since October 2012.

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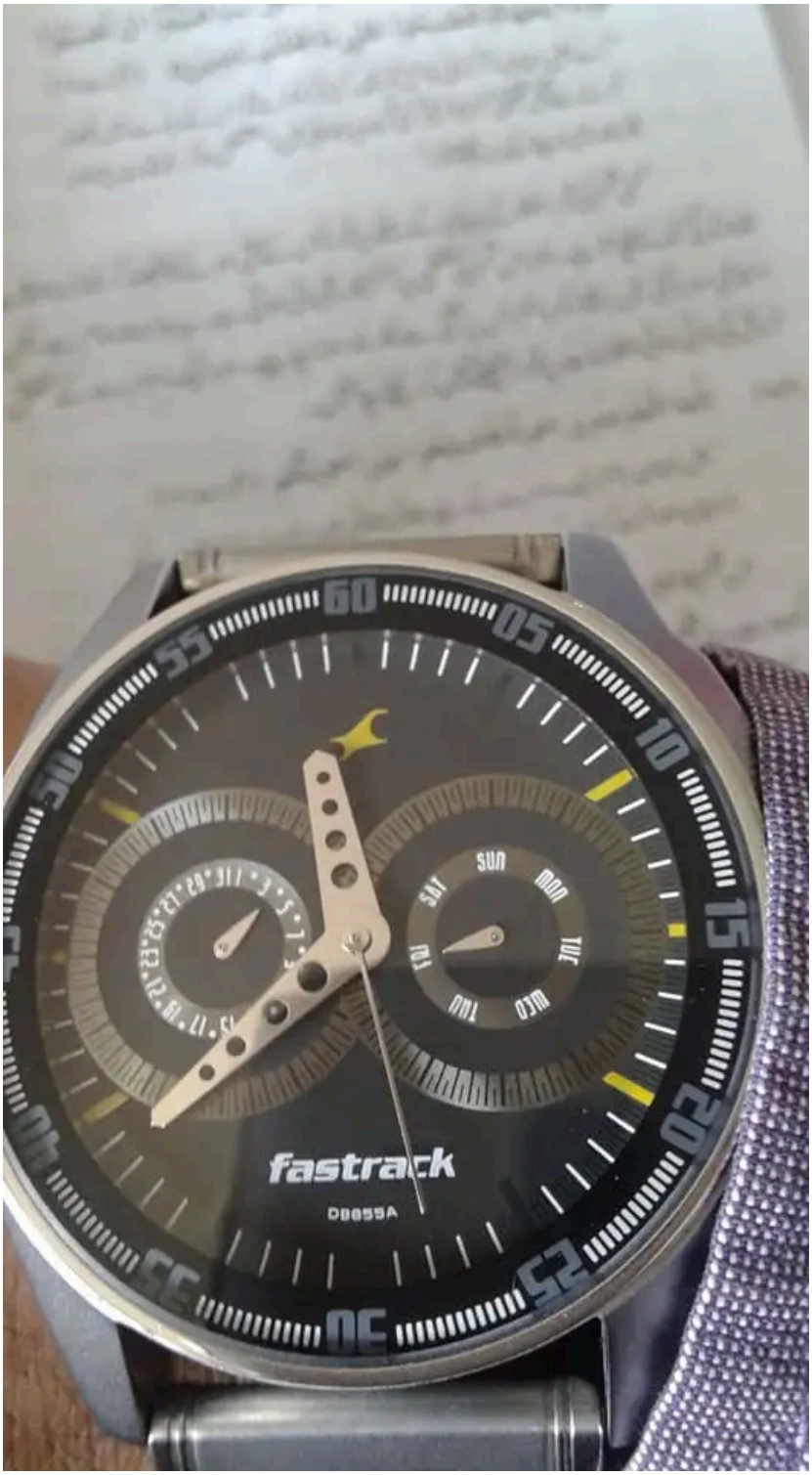
بے شک میری نماز، میری قربانی، میرا جینا
Mohmmad Rafi
Friends
Following
Message
More
Human being first then a Muslim
Teaching Sociology at Department of Sociology University of Kashmir at University of Kashmir
PhD Sociology at University of Kashmir
Studied at University of Kashmir

"Human being first then a Muslim," notes the Intro on Rafi's Facebook profile. Much of the profile is public. His last Facebook post on Friday May 4, hours before he went missing, is signed in with the tag 'feeling blessed' in 'University of Kashmir.' [footnote] When the year of the posts is not given, it is the current year 2018.[/footnote]It has two pictures of a farewell poem in Urdu, and another one of a *fastrack* watch on his right wrist. The accompanying text are his final publically written words:

[su_quote]Gift from my students. I will remember your love and respect. Allah bless you all.[/su_quote]



The following is an excerpt from the poem written by his students that was published in a local daily along with the news of his death:

Dhoop me chhawoun sa
Thandi thandi hawaoun sa

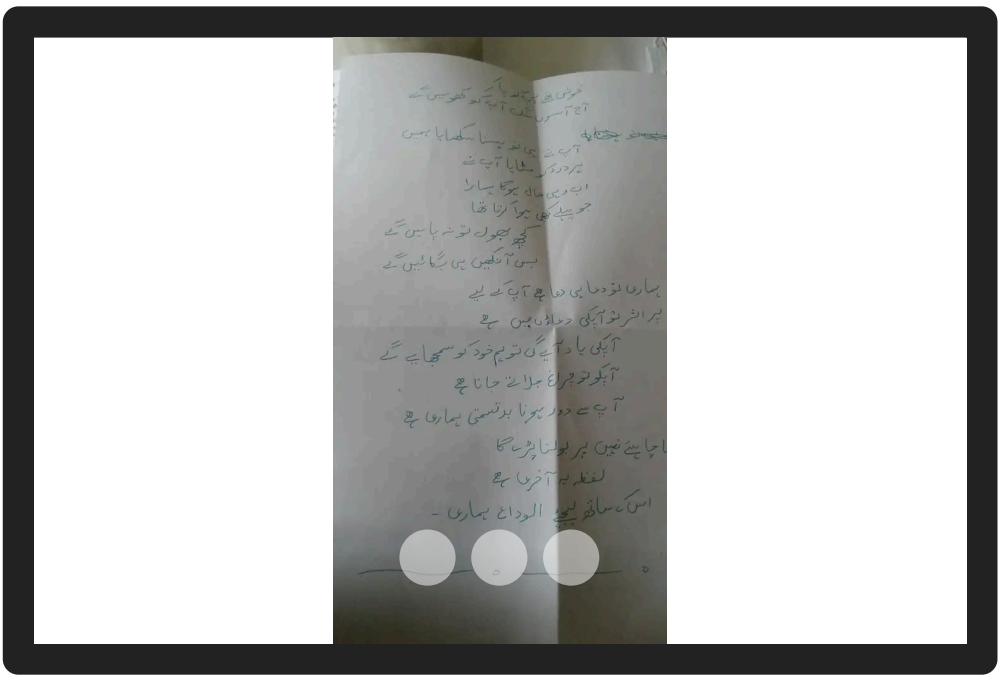
Apki yaad sabko aayegi
Mat jao na ap, bahut rulayegi

Humara jahan rahega adhoora sa

(You are) Like a shade in scorching sun
(You are) Like a cool breeze

We all will miss you
Please don't go, it will make us cry

Our world will be incomplete



Popular among his students for "his jolly nature, a unique style of teaching, and a habit of exchanging ideas, gifts and books," Rafi took a selfie with some of his students before heading out.

Many of those who knew him in Kashmir have been writing about their memories of Rafi on his timeline and posts such as his playing cricket on the University campus, discussing Marx's perspective on religion, or his advices as a teacher. Many, including those who have come to know about him only after his killing, have been paying their respects. On the other hand, many in India, who support Indian military's actions in Kashmir, have also been writing abuses, posting morphed pictures, and celebrating his killing.

A number of Rafi's public posts provide a peek into his life—a partial archive of his scholarly, social and political concerns; ideas and anxieties; a keen interest in Urdu poetry; and perhaps also a sense of foreboding about his impending death.

The cover picture, uploaded on March 6, notes a verse from the Quran, 6:162: "Say, Indeed, my prayer, my sacrifice, my living, and my dying are for Allah, Lord of the worlds." This is also one of the five "Featured Photos" which includes a picture of Malcolm X, uploaded on December 12 2016, with the quote: "Don't be in such a hurry to condemn a person because he doesn't do what you do, or think as you think. There was a time when you didn't know what you know today." Elsewhere, there are photos of Martin Luther King. One of them, uploaded on 9 2015, is with the quotation: "Freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed." The other, uploaded on April 6 2016, notes: "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."

The very next cover picture, uploaded on March 2 2018, notes a verse from the poet Faiz Ahmed Faiz:

Dil na-umeed tou nahi, na-kaam hi tou hai
Lambi hai gham ki shaam, magar shaam hi tou hai

Heart might be unsuccessful, but hasn't lost hope
The sad night might be long, but it shall pass[footnote]The Urdu transliterations and translations, when not already available, are by the author unless noted otherwise. When already available in the source documents, they have been produced as such, with slight editing for consistency in the article. [/footnote]

A repost earlier on the same day, of the text originally posted on March 2, 2015, is a Friedrich Nietzsche quote from *Die Götzen-Dämmerung – Twilight of the Idols*: "He who has a why to live for can bear almost any how."[footnote]The above is the text that Rafi posted which is also commonly available online. The translation as seen in the written the source text is as follows: "If we have our own why in life, we shall get along with almost any how." [/footnote]

Faiz features many times. On November 11 2017, Rafi posted the following lines with the caption "*Haq farmaya Faiz g, [You speak the truth, Faiz ji!]*":

Nisaar mein teri galiyoun key aey watan ki jahaan
Chali hai rasm ki koyi na sar utha key chaley
Jo koyi chahney waala tawaaf ko nikley
Nazar chura key chaley, jism-o-jaan bacha key chaley

I offer myself to your streets, my land, where
The custom doesn't allow people to walk with heads held high
Any lover who goes about
Must hide his gaze; save his body and soul

On January 20, he posted the opening verse of Faiz's poem *Subh-e Azadi* (Dawn of Independence):

Ye daag daag ujaala, ye shab guzeeda sahar
Wo intezaar tha jiska, ye wo seher tou nahi

This stained light, this night-bitten dawn
This is not that long-awaited day break

On January 24, he posted the picture of Urdu text of Faiz's poem *Kuttay* (Dogs) about the depredations of the poor and oppressed, who, provided they realize their worth, could rise to rule the world. On January 28, he posted the text of *Aey khaak nasheenou uth baitho (Hey children of the earth rise up!)* in which Faiz exhorts the masses to rise in revolution and force reckoning upon the oppressive ruling classes.

The poet-philosopher Muhammad Iqbal also features prominently. On October 20 2017, he posted the following verse:

Nishan yehi hai zamane mein zinda quomoun ka
Ke subha-o-sham badalti hain in ki taqdeerain

It is the sign of living nations
Their fate changes day and night

Following three verses were posted separately on November 8 2017:

Utho! meri duniya ke gareeboun ko jagaado
kakh e umra ke dar o dewaar hila dou

Arise! Awaken the poor of my world
Shake the doors and walls of the mansions of the rich

Azad ki doulat-e-dil roshan, nafs-e-garam
Mehkoom ka sarmaya faqt didah'ay namnaak

A free man's wealth, a shining heart and warm breath,
That of slave, only moist eyes

Nikl kar khanqahon se ada kar rasm-e-Shabeeri
Ke faqr-e-khanqahi hai faqat andoh-o-dilgeeri

Come out of the monastery and play the role of Shabbir
For monastery's faqr is but grief and affliction

On November 29 2017, he posted the following poem by Habib Jalib:

Ab gunahou sawaab biktey hain
maan lijiye janab biktey hain

Pehley pehley ghareeb biktey the
Ab tou izzat ma'aab biktey hain

Sheikh, wa'iz, wazeer, aur shair
Sab yehan par janab biktey hain

Daur tha inqalaab aatey the
Ajkal inquilab biktey hain

Nowadays, sins and good deeds are saleable
Think, people themselves are saleable

Earlier, poor were saleable
Now, the respected are also saleable

Chief, preacher, minister, and poet
All of them are saleable

There was a time, revolutions arrived
These days, revolutions are saleable

On December 5 2017, he posted the following verse by Amir Uthmani:

Me jaanta tha daar sey qareeb waadiye wafa
Usi dagar pe lechala junoon mujhey kashaan kashaan

I knew about the Valley of fulfilment near the gallows
My spirit took me on that very path of hardship

On December 22 2017, he posted a verse by Ghalib:

Hum kahaan ke daana they, kis hunar meñ yaktaa they
Be-sabab hua ghalib dushman asmaan apna

I wasn't among the wise, nor unique in some skill
Without any reason, the skies turned my enemy

One more by Ghalib from January 23 is posted with the signed in caption 'feeling heartbroken.'

Bas ki dushwaar hai har kaam ka asaan hona
Aadmi ko mayassar nahi insaan hona

It is just not possible for all things to be easy
Man does not get to be human

On January 6, he posted a picture of the following verse by Momin Khan Momin:

Karta hai qatl-e aam wo agyaar ke liye
Das bees roz martey hain dou chaar k liye

He kills with impunity for the strangers' cause
Scores die everyday for a few

On February 3, Mir Taqi Mir's following verse:

Kab is umr me aadmi sheikh hoga
Kitabein rakhe saath gu ek kharbaar

How will a person be wise at this age
The books are like the donkey's burden

Few days later, on February 9, which is also the anniversary of Afzal Guru's hanging, Rafi reposted the following text, posted originally in the year of Guru's hanging in 2013:

Mout ko samajhtey hain gaafil ikhtitam e zindagi
Hai ye shaam e zindagi, subhi dawam e zindagi

Death; fools perceive it to be end of life
It is the end of life, but (also the) dawn of an eternal life

Shahaadat ki mout, s'aadat ki mout"

The death of martyrdom, the death of blessing

Elsewhere he has posted a picture, uploaded on March 8 2013, with the following words below the images of Maqbool Bhat and Afzal Guru:

Shaheed tumse ye keh rahey hain
Lahu humara bhula na dena

The Martyrs are telling you
Not to forget our blood

Like many in Kashmir and elsewhere, Rafi's posts are an indication of his thinking about the dynamics of oppression and possible ways to resist. On March 4, he reposted

Howard Zinn's following words, originally posted on the same date in 2015:

[su_quote]Civil disobedience is not a problem. Our problem is civil obedience. Our problem is that people all over the world have obeyed the dictates of leaders…and millions have been killed because of this obedience…Our problem is that people are obedient all over the world in the face of poverty and starvation and stupidity, and war, and cruelty. Our problem is that people are obedient while the jails are full of petty thieves… (and) the grand thieves are running the country. That's our problem.[/su_quote]

Rafi was clearly very well read, but that was no reason for arrogance. His kindness and humility, which his friends and family have been reporting, are also evident in the following lines posted on March 22, originally posted in 2016:

> *Agar haadi-saati tour par apne do chaar kitabein zyada padhli hain, tou dosroon ka jeena tou haram na karein.*
>
> ***If you have accidentally read a few more books, that should not make you rub it on others.***

MONTH BEFORE THE LAST

On Sunday April 1, when 13 rebels were killed in three separate encounters in South Kashmir, Rafi posted the following status on his timeline:

[su_quote]Every day people die but never Kashmir is interested who and how many. But few die and whole Valley cry. May Allah be pleased with them.[/su_quote]

On April 14, the Professor reminisced about his own teachers who influenced and inspired him, right from his primary school to the university. He mentions some favorites and ends with a thanks and a wish: "I am indebted to all my teachers whose names I have not mentioned. May Allah bless all of my teachers."

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=47&v=1tP6LQVxanI

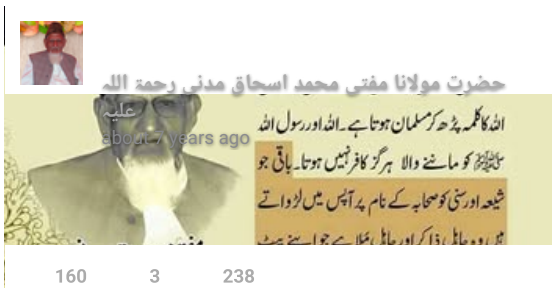
On April 18, he wrote a post in response to the "Enforced closure of educational institutes" by the government in order to contain widespread students' protests against ongoing killings in Kashmir:

[su_quote]Onus lies with the men/women in power who are hell bent to exercise the power to remain in power. Alas this power game is putting students on trial who are now scared and unsafe even in the places where they should be at least safe and secure. By blocking all the peaceful means of expressing dissent what remains there is self defense against armed insecurity forces. It is existing circumstances which is fuelling student protests. The way forward is change in status quo. Where power won't be exercised for the sake of power.[/su_quote]

On April 25, he dedicated a post to his students. Signed in as 'Feeling Proud' he wrote:

[su_quote]As a teacher if you have such students to whom you really mean much more than mere something what else may you ask for. I am proud of you my dear students. I cannot forget your batch. You will be with me with utmost loving memories. May Allah bless you all. Today I really feel proud of being a teacher. (Sociology PG students (supplementary) University of Kashmir Batch 2016-17-18).[/su_quote]

On April 29, seemingly troubled by the recent protests by the Hazara community in Pakistan's Quetta city, Rafi posted a picture



and a video lecture of Mufti Muhammad Ishaq Madni, a Pakistani scholar who stresses the need for unity among the Muslim communities. A portion of the highlighted text in the picture translates as: "Those who make Shia and Sunni fight among themselves in the name of the companions, are ignorant clerics who worship nothing else but their own desires."

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7t_FMfxZEV8&feature=share

On April 30, Rafi updated his final profile picture.

On May 1, he shared his final news post, a Washington Post article about the killing of two rebels, Sameer Tiger and Auqib Ahmad Khan, in Drabgam village in South

Kashmir. At least fourteen other people were also injured on the same day.

*

Even from a distance, Rafi's story and thoughts can be gleaned from his Facebook profile and the news reports that have been published exclusively about him. A greater attention to detail about his story also comes from the fact that he was known among university circles which many more people might identify with. The stories of others killed along with him—rebels as well as civilians—perhaps may not be written with such description. Yet, they are no less adored, mourned and remembered by the people.

As it rained on Sunday, thousands of people rushed towards Heff village in Shopian to have a last glimpse of the thirty-two-year old Saddam Padder, and forty-one-year old Bilal Moulvi who last came home to see his parents, wife and two daughters on Saturday night. Fifteen rounds of funeral prayers were not enough to accommodate everyone, and the burial was delayed by a day. The rains intensified by early morning on Monday, yet people continued to jostle for space as the nearby Eidgah grounds were filled to capacity. Some climbed the surrounding walls and poplar trees. The duo was finally buried after five more rounds of funeral prayers, but not before the thirty-two-year-old Saddam's mother, Firdausa, participated in the gun-salute, the second time in two days, as she fired three shots in the air while standing on the terrace of a house overlooking the burial ground. His sister and brother also participated in the gun-salutes. A total of a hundred thousand people are reported to have participated in the duo's funeral prayers, the largest since Burhan Wani's in July 2016. In a separate burial in Malikgund village of Shopian, Adil Thokar was buried after six back to back funerals.

Saddam belonged to a well-off family involved in timber trade who witnessed his transition from a participant in street protests a decade ago, which often landed him in jail, to becoming one of the top rebel commanders in South Kashmir. While he had been active for more than four years, the most senior among the group was Tauseef Sheikh, who joined in 2013 as a sixteen-year-old. He was also the sixteenth member of his family to have joined the rebels since the 1990's, and the fifteenth to be killed.

Early morning on Sunday, Tauseef's mother, Naseema Bano, picked the call from an unknown number in excitement. She had guessed the person right, but did not expect his words: "I am trapped in a cordon. There are no chances of escape…I had promised to meet you but that might not happen now. We will meet in the hereafter. Pray for me." As the weight of her son's final words dawned upon her, Naseema responded: "Allah is with you. Be steadfast on your path." When Tauseef's bullet ridden body was brought home in the afternoon, people who started assembling to pay their last respects, walked through the village road decorated with a collage of top rebels including many from his family. Naseema spoke of her son proudly: "He was their commander in the entire district and that I why at least 12 militants came in the groups of fours to offer him gun salute. He was a different militant, a thinking one." She added: "There will be no one like him now…there is no purpose to this life now." His sister, Rafeeqa, added: "Our sons and brother have given their blood for this movement."

Rafi, Saddam, Bilal, Adil, and Tauseef, all were buried amidst the mournful, yet musical chants of pro-freedom slogans and songs.

*

How does one end the mourning? How does one conclude the mourning? Perhaps by going back to the words of those who no longer need to mourn.

One of Rafi's cover pictures, uploaded on November 10, 2013, notes the following verse:

> *Jahaan me ahl-e-imaan soorat-e-khurshid jeetay hain*
> *Idhar doobey, udhar nikley, udhar doobey, idhar niklay*
>
> ***In this world, the people of faith live like the sun***
> ***They set here to rise there, set there to rise somewhere else***

Another one, uploaded on March 2 2017, has the following lines:

> *Daayim abaad rahegi duniya,*
> *Hum na hongey, koyi humsa hoga*
>
> ***The world shall always continue to exist***
> ***We won't be around, someone like us will***

Rafi had left his home possibly to join the rebels. Whether he formally joined remains unknown. He did not upload the signature picture with a rifle in his hand to announce his decision. But what remains certain is that the Professor did not leave them when the first shots were fired. Perhaps, he had foreseen this. One of his other cover pictures, uploaded on December 7 2017, reads as follows:

> *Hum dosti me darakhtoun ki tarah hain sahib!*
> *Jahaan lag jaayein, wahin mudattoun khade rehtey hain.*
>
> ***In friendship, we are like trees, Saheb.***
> ***We stay put for ages wherever we find root.***

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